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Traditional teaching methodology and materials are founded on the premise that all U.S. born citizens speak English as the mother tongue. Precedence is given to the development of reading and writing at an early level. The disadvantaged Mexican-American lacks the necessary linguistic experiences in the English language to assure him success in school--evidenced by the large number of drop-outs among this group. Most teachers have been accustomed to "insight building," which has been developed in the child at home through a healthy adult-child interaction. This approach is not applicable to the disadvantaged pupil coming from a home where there is "limited verbal orientation." Because disciplines such as the social studies, science, and mathematics are traditionally taught through the lecture method with the teacher doing most of the talking, the disadvantaged Mexican-American child is not involved in oral English communication at all. These students need to achieve as much course content as their counterparts, and at the same time overcome their linguistic obstacles so as to be able to compete on all levels of education. The content materials of these courses may be structured to utilize a variety of audiolingual techniques providing maximum opportunities for verbalization. The "Inquiry Approach" for a 4th grade science lesson is illustrated. (AMM)

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ON TEACHING THE DISCIPLINES TO DISADVANTAGED MEXICAN-AMERICANS

A Linguistic Approach

Current research on the Disadvantaged Mexican-American points to a need for well defined objectives and guidelines in education, which, when closely scrutinized, differ from those of his counterpart, the typical middle class pupil. Of paramount importance are those objectives aimed at fulfilling the linguistic needs of these children, which too often have been overlooked or ignored. Not that the disadvantaged Mexican-American child belongs to a separate group in ability, but because of certain cultural, psychological and sociological factors, creating a linguistic uniqueness, his needs can only be fulfilled through modifications of present curriculum programs, and more important, innovative methods of instruction.

Our traditional method of instruction, curriculum programs, texts and course materials are all founded on the premise that all U.S. born citizens speak English as the mother tongue. Precedence is then given, at an early level, to the development of reading and writing skills. This is correct insofar as the student who comes from the typical middle class English speaking home is concerned. In most cases, this pupil has a good command of highly structured English patterns which he is able to utilize to full advantage even before he enters school.

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The disadvantaged Mexican-American, on the other hand, lacks the necessary linguistic experiences in the English language to assure him success in school. Placing him in a classroom environment alien to his needs puts him in a situation for which he is totally unprepared. Too soon he convinces himself that he is doomed to failure in the school world. The retention rate in the elementary grades and the large number of drop-outs among Mexican-Americans is sad testimony to this fact.

Further, most teachers have been trained to work with children who are accustomed to "insight" building which has been thoroughly developed at home through a healthy adult-child interaction. These teachers' approach is not applicable to the disadvantaged pupil who comes from a home where there is limited verbal orientation. Whatever oral experiences these students have are usually limited to question and monsyllabic response type of communication. What this means is that the Student is in the habit of responding with one word or short phrase responses. This habit is transferred to the classroom environment. Question by teachers are hardly ever answered with elaborate patterns. Also, the teacher devotes a large portion of the classroom period to reading and writing activities which require the student to follow his oral directions. Social Social Studies, Science, Mathematics and most other disciplines are traditionally taught through the lecture method with the teacher doing most of the speaking. This is true in the elementary grades and junior high school. In the case of English, certainly the child's most important class period, the activities center around sentence analyses, rules of grammar with very limited opportunities for oral experiences. The Disadvantaged Mexican-American child is not involved in oral English communication at all. Finally, when this child goes home at the end of the

school day, he re-enters an environment which only re-enforces the negative situation the school is presently trying to abolish.

We are not overlooking the fact that today's child, no matter how disadvantaged he is, is exposed to massive and highly concentrated communication media. English language T.V. programs and English language movies are two cases in point. These are however, all passive type of communication experiences. The child is still not speaking English. He is not actively involved in a situation where he must use the language. The classroom then becomes the only place which can provide him with maximum experience in the language. It is the one place where he can be guided towards a functional command of the English and yet, this is the place that denies him this opportunity because, as we mentioned before, objectives, materials and methods are not geared at fulfilling the linguistic needs of these students.

The approach desired is not to provide bland and watered-down courses to facilitate learning for these children. The disadvantaged Mexican-American is not expected to learn less history, less math, less science than his counterpart. On the contrary, he needs to achieve as much course content, but at the same time over come his linguistic obstacles so as to be able to compete fairly with his counterpart at all levels of education.

Although providing learning experiences for these children is the ultimate objective of any school program, we believe that language development during the process of learning must become, equally, an ultimate objective. Both need to complement each other, but language as a communication skill needs to have ample opportunity for total development. The development process should occur in all subjects and all grade levels of school.

This calls then for structuring the content materials of the program for math, science, history and other subject matter and presenting it to the student utilizing a variety of audio-lingual techniques. By doing this, teachers of these disciplines are providing maximum opportunities for verbalization thus re-enforcing both the learning process and the development of functional English for the disadvantaged Mexican-American.

Presentation of this unit for 4th grade Science follows the Inquiry Approach. This calls for posing questions to arouse curiosity. In the initial step, the teacher accepts whatever type of response pattern given by the student. Following the questions, the teacher directs individual students towards active involvment in the experiment. The student is told to place a tissue on a heated radiator so as to illustrate that heat rises. As the teacher proceeds with the experiment, he poses questions to elicit oral responses. The teacher then presents the model while actively involved in the experiment. Example: "See how heat rises". "Heat rises" Once the learning process for this particular lesson has been completed, the teacher proceeds to focus attention on the linguistic needs. The focus in this lesson is comprehension and correct usage of such vocabulary items as "expand" and "contract". Also, to provide practice in the correct pronunciation of the final s, voiced and voiceless: (/s/ and /z/) and develop the skill of producing the sounds.

The lesson is then structured to include a variety of drills. Repetition drills of desired responses are conducted followed by question-response exercises. A mimeographed copy of the lesson is distributed. The teacher then reads the lesson aloud as a model for the pupils. The paragraph is then read in choral by the students. Students then volunteer to read the paragraph aloud individually.

It is important that all have an opportunity to read the lesson individually and aloud and the teacher should make an effort to encourage those who will hesitate to read. By modeling the reading first, followed by several choral readings it is hoped that every child will be familiar with the paragraph and be able to handle it individually.

Some of the drills which can be effectively used for this lesson are here presented:

Linguistic skill: **Distinguish between /s/ and /z/**

Teacher: Hot air rises.
It rises.

What does it do? Student: It rises:

Linguistic skill: Use of the conjunction - and

Teacher: Cold air sinks. Cold air contracts.
Cold air sinks and contracts.

What are two things cold air does?

Student: It sinks and contracts.
Or: Cold air sinks and contracts.

This lesson has been structured for use with drills such as repetition, substitution, transformation, replacement, restatement, expansion and completion, and are too numerous to provide examples here. It is not intended that all drills in the lesson be presented at one time. Drill work, as such, should be limited to not more than five minutes in a single class period. The reason for this is obvious. However, once the teacher of the particular subject has become "linguistic conscious" many of these drills will automatically be injected during the learning process.

Along with testing for cognition is evaluation of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A dicta-

tion exercise will cover the listening and writing skills simultaneously. Speaking can be evaluated through oral questions with free responses.

Example: Teacher: What are three facts about hot air?

Student: Hot air rises, expands and weighs less.

In conclusion, there is no end to the number of activities in the classroom which will provide for oral experiences and the conscientious teacher of whatever discipline will make every effort to provide these activities thus re-enforcing what the English as a second language teacher is trying to accomplish.